United Nations

S/2002/12

Security Council

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2 January 2002
English
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Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic

I. Introduction

1. In the statement by its President dated 26 September 2001 (S/PRST/2001/25) amending the mandate of the United Nations Peace-Building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA), the Security Council requested me to continue to keep it regularly informed of the activities of BONUCA and the situation in the Central African Republic, particularly in the areas of political dialogue, national reconciliation and respect for human rights. This report is submitted pursuant to that request.

II. Political situation

2. Since my previous report to the Security Council, dated 21 September 2001 (S/2001/886), the political situation in the Central African Republic has continued to be marked by the repercussions of the attempted coup d'etat of 28 May 2001. On 9 October 2001 the Joint Commission of Judicial Inquiry submitted its partial conclusions to President Ange-Felix Patassé. They were also immediately forwarded to the competent judicial authorities. It was expected that the trial of the putschists would commence in December 2001, involving about 700 individuals, of which 70 are in custody and 628 are fugitives.

3. The political situation, which has been precarious ever since the attempted coup, deteriorated further when President Patassé relieved General Bozizé of his duties as Chief of Staff of the Central African armed forces on 26 October 2001.

4. On 2 November 2001 the Public Prosecutor of the Republic issued an arrest warrant against General Bozizé following the discovery of a cache of weapons in his residential quarters in Bangui. The General resisted arrest and gathered a guard around him for his protection.

5. On 3 November 2001, my Representative, General Lamine Cissé, undertook a good offices mission to bring the two parties together. On the basis of unwritten concessions by both parties, President Patassé promised to appoint General Bozizé to another post and to consider granting a pardon once the judicial procedure was completed.

6. For his part, General Bozizé seemed to be willing to be questioned by the Commission of Inquiry in the presence of my Representative on BONUCA premises. This arrangement had also been considered by the Minister of Justice, who even proposed to suspend the arrest warrant. General Bozizé promised my Representative on 6 November 2001 that he would remove the barricades he had erected on 2 November on the north road, which had a stranglehold on the capital.

7. All that remained was to set down the reciprocal concessions of the parties in writing. But on the morning of 7 November, government troops attacked General Bozizé's positions and those of his men working on dismantling the barricades in the presence of two BONUCA officials assigned to witness the opening of the north road. General Bozizé and his supporters (around 300 men) fell back to the frontier with Chad. General Bozizé took refuge in Chad with some of his troops; the others chose to remain in Central African territory with their weapons. President Patassé later announced that a telephone conversation had been intercepted during the night of 6 to 7

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November that revealed that General Bozizé had been planning a coup d'état.

8. The Central African authorities summoned General Bozizé to appear before the courts of his country, stressing the "purely judicial character" of the case. President Déby of Chad, citing the provisions of his country's constitution that prohibit extradition of political refugees to their country of origin or any other country where their safety is not assured, refused to consider extraditing General Bozizé. Instead, the President of Chad suggested negotiations, with the involvement of the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations.

9. On 7 November 2001, the Permanent Mission of the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to the United Nations informed me that the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, with the consent of the Government of the Central African Republic, was proposing that the new political and military crisis should be addressed by sending international observers and a peacekeeping force composed of contingents from African States, including neighbouring countries, to the Central African Republic.

10. On 14 November 2001, President Patassé reduced General Bozizé to the rank of private second class and deprived him of his pension rights and military awards on the grounds that he had threatened the internal security of the State in removing himself from the control of the Central African armed forces.

11. The former General is said to be in Sahr in southern Chad at present. His supporters still in Central African territory have had several confrontations with government forces, notably on 23 November and 5 December. Since 26 November, some of his forces have been driven back into Chadian territory, where they have been disarmed by Chadian armed forces.

12. The former Chief of Staff of the Central African armed forces claims to be willing to negotiate with his country's authorities. That is also the position of Chad, which has granted him political asylum. On 14 November 2001, the head of State of Chad forwarded a message to me to that effect through my Representative in Bangui and asked me to help to persuade President Patassé to agree to negotiations on the fate of General Bozizé and his men.

13. Efforts have been made at the regional level to arrive at a negotiated solution to this new Central African crisis. A delegation from the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States (composed of the ministers for foreign affairs of Burkina Faso, Chad and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and the Ambassador of the Sudan to N'Djamena) and a delegation from the Organization of African Unity (OAU) (including the Under-Secretary-General) arrived in Bangui on 7 November 2001 and were received by President Patassé. The OAU delegation, which stayed in Bangui from 7 to 12 November 2001, met with all the political actors and the organizations of civil society to explore with them ways and means of finding a lasting solution to the Central African crisis.

14. Internally, the Bozizé affair added to the persistent tension between the majority and the opposition. On 14 November 2001, the opposition political parties issued a statement whereby they requested, inter alia, an amnesty for General Bozizé and his men, the disbanding of the Commission of Judicial Inquiry into the failed putsch of 28 May 2001 and the withdrawal of Libyan troops from the Central African Republic. This statement prompted a quick reaction from the President of the Republic, who accused the opposition leaders of complicity with those involved in the putsch.

15. A peaceful end to the Bozizé affair is to be desired in order to prevent, on the one hand, creating instability and insecurity in the north of the Central African Republic and, on the other, contributing to the deterioration of subregional relations. That is why I support all subregional initiatives that seek to restore calm and stability to the Central African Republic.

16. In the final communiqué (S/2001/1148, annex), the mini-summit of the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) on peace and stability in the Central African Republic, which was held in Khartoum on 3 December 2001, decided, inter alia, to establish, for an interim period, a force to keep the peace in the Central African Republic; to form a political committee for national reconciliation in the Central African Republic; to establish a fund to provide support to the Central African Republic. The Libreville summit, which was held on 4 and 5 December 2001, decided to create an ad hoc committee of heads of State to promote a resumption of the political dialogue in the Central African Republic; it also asked President Patassé to take steps to ensure calm and launched an urgent appeal to the international community for assistance to the Central African economy. My Representative

attended both summits and will continue to support the efforts of African leaders so that the subregion is not destabilized by another conflict.

17. Responding to the numerous calls for calm, the Central African authorities put an end, on 24 December 2001, to all judicial proceedings instituted against former General Bozizé and his men. I congratulate President Patassé for that welcome initiative and encourage him to persevere in his efforts to promote national reconciliation.

18. Former General Bozizé set a number of conditions for his return to Bangui, including the proclamation of a general amnesty, the departure of foreign troops, cancellation of the sending of a peacekeeping force to the Central African Republic and the holding of a national dialogue.

19. As regards political dialogue and national reconciliation, the Government has taken initiatives as a result, inter alia, of the good offices of my Representative. In preparation for the forthcoming meeting between President Patassé and the leaders of all the political parties, the Prime Minister received the latter on 23 November 2001. I hope this heralds the start of the future political dialogue for which BONUCA will spare no effort. Since the 25 June 2001 meeting between President Patassé and the Central African political classes there had been no further contact between the majority and the opposition. According to my Representative, this meeting could take place any time.

20. In addition, the authorities appealed to the men who followed former General Bozizé to return to their barracks without fear and in all safety. On the national holiday, 1 December, President Patassé made a solemn appeal for the return of civilian refugees from Zongo (Democratic Republic of the Congo). At the prompting of BONUCA and with the assistance of the agencies of the United Nations system, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), a committee was set up on 29 November 2001 to consider the practical modalities for receiving the refugees. Only a trickle have returned officially, but many refugees have returned to Bangui quietly. BONUCA and the United Nations agencies are trying to give the refugees every assurance and have planned specific measures to that effect.

21. These initiatives which will be completed later by a call for the return of the men who have taken refuge in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the Republic of the Congo, will no doubt help rebuild confidence gradually and re-establish the dialogue and consultation among Central Africans. Already the curfew has been lifted since 1 December 2001.

III. Social situation

22. The calm on the social front, which was noted immediately following the events of 28 May 2001, has been confirmed. Workers deliberately refrained from resorting to any form of protest and adopted the same attitude during the Bozizé affair.

23. In the course of the many working meetings which my Representative had with trade union leaders, the latter agreed that, although their claims were justified and legitimate, they would not add to the fragility of the country's already precarious situation by calling for any work stoppages. For his part, my Representative is continuing to make them aware of the need to keep in contact with the authorities. Thanks to his continued efforts, the social dialogue that began in August 2001 has been maintained.

24. The Prime Minister thus received all the trade union leaders on 21 November 2001 in preparation for the forthcoming meeting with President Patassé. In the course of this meeting, the head of the Government reiterated the commitment of the authorities to make every effort to find a definitive solution to the salaries crisis.

IV. Human rights situation

25. During the period under review, instances of extrajudicial execution and arbitrary detention have been brought to the attention of BONUCA. Serious violations of the right to life have been committed, inter alia by uniformed elements. On 29 July 2001, two young customs officers were murdered in cold blood because, it was alleged, they were former mutineers.

26. The use of information files is creating some unease, insofar as the files are fairly often grounds for numerous arrests. Cases of untimely house searches have been brought to the attention of the human rights section; it also continues to receive complaints about certain arrests. On 6 and 8 December 2001, two

deputies, including the first Vice-President of the National Assembly, were arrested — although their immunity had not been waived — because the prosecution claimed that they were in flagrante delicto.

27. The human rights section of BONUCA has received numerous complaints regarding the requirement that any Central African wishing to travel by air must have an exit permit. The permit, which is issued to individuals by the Joint Commission of Judicial Inquiry, certifies that they were not involved in the failed coup d'état of 28 May.

28. The situation in the prisons remains troubling despite the recent efforts made by the Government to renovate the central prison of Ngaragba, which was destroyed during the mutinies of 1997. Police stations and offices of the former Survey, Research and Documentation Section (SERD) have become detention centres where the people arrested since the attempted coup d'état are held under very precarious conditions.

29. BONUCA continues to pay regular visits to those detained, both in the provinces and in Bangui. This includes the former Minister of Defence, Jean-Jacques Démafouth, who was arrested on 25 August 2001, placed under house arrest and denied the right to have visitors. It also includes the former president of the Bar, Zarambaud Assingambi, who was arrested on 26 September for allegedly participating in the failed putsch. My Representative made great efforts to obtain his release pending trial and succeeded on 10 December 2001.

30. Immediately following the attempted coup d'état of 28 May some Central Africans, fearing for their lives, sought refuge in the embassies of Chad, France and the United States. Since July 2001, the Office, in the context of a tripartite commission (Government-embassies-BONUCA), has been actively encouraging these people to leave. A certificate duly signed by the members of the tripartite commission has each time been delivered to the individual concerned as a guarantee of his safety. Only 10 people (out of the 113 registered in June 2001) still remain in the residence of the Ambassador of France in Bangui.

31. It should, however, be noted that 17 people who had been in police custody since the attempted coup d'état were released on 12 November 2001 after their hearing. Two religious leaders (including one foreign priest, head of the Notre Dame private radio station) were released recently following a variety of interventions, including by my Representative.

32. The Office has continued its human rights training activities inside the country. Between July and December 2001 it trained more than 150 law enforcement personnel (gendarmes and police officers) from the provinces of Nana-Mambéré (west), Ouham (north) and Sangha-Mbaéré (south-west).

33. As part of the activities to commemorate the fifty-third anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a seminar was held from 10 to 13 December 2001 on the role of the courts in the context of peace-building. About 100 court personnel (judges, lawyers and notaries) attended. Another seminar for mayors and district and village chiefs will be held at the beginning of 2002 in order to make them aware of their role in promoting and safeguarding of human rights. Lastly, the Office is continuing its radio broadcasts to raise awareness and disseminate knowledge about human rights.

34. The failed coup of 28 May 2001 and the Bozizé affair has had a serious impact on the Central African armed forces, with the regular army losing 1,300 soldiers. Most of the deserters fled south to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the remainder, following the former Chief of the General Staff, went north into Chad. The army, already rather small in numbers, is now in a serious state of disarray and needs more men. The Government plans initially to recruit 400 former soldiers in December 2001. New recruits will also be brought in, but at a later date.

V. Security and military situation

35. As part of their policy to restructure the defence and security forces, the authorities have decided that the recruiting process will take place at the prefectural level, rather than in Bangui as in the past, so that the country's armed forces will be truly national and multi-ethnic. Barracks will also be decentralized, thereby reducing the number of soldiers in Bangui and improving security in the capital.

36. The rebellion led by General Bozizé led to a worsening in the security situation. The northern areas of Bangui were practically inaccessible, and many fleeing inhabitants had settled on the outskirts of the city. Although the tension has eased following the northward retreat by Bozizé and his men, acts of armed

banditry and robberies are still reported in the area. To restore security, the Government has recently decided that all off-duty military personnel are to be forbidden to carry weapons and that those breaking this rule will be punished.

37. The Government's security concerns relating to the presence of armed refugees in Zongo have abated somewhat since the refugees were transferred to Bokilio, 120 kilometres from Bangui, in October and November 2001. This was achieved thanks to concerted efforts by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), BONUCA and Mr. Jean-Pierre Bemba, who controls that area. In the northern region bordering on Chad, however, the security situation may deteriorate following clashes between government forces and Bozizé supporters. Although the latter have mostly been pushed back into Chadian territory, where they were disarmed, some troops loyal to the former Chief of the General Staff are still in Central African territory, and their presence may lead to further clashes with the regular army.

38. The continuing security problems in the Central African Republic are also due to arms proliferation in both the capital and the interior. Consequently, on the initiative of BONUCA and under its leadership, a disarmament and weapons collection strategy has been worked out with help from UNDP, in liaison with the Government. The aim is to collect weapons that are held illegally, particularly by the civilian population and irregular armed groups. Funded in part by UNDP, this operation will begin shortly; the authorities have already set up the necessary structures.

39. An analysis of the restructuring of the armed forces has been carried out by BONUCA, in close collaboration with the Government. A plan of action has been produced, providing for measures to redeploy military units and rehabilitate infrastructure. The State itself has undertaken to rebuild some barracks with aid from external partners such as France, the latter being by far the country's largest source of foreign assistance.

40. Training programmes for the police and gendarmerie have been carried out by the civilian police team from the Office. Three training and refresher courses on public safety, command, and police files and crime statistics were held between August and November 2001. In December 2001 there will be four more refresher courses designed respectively for gendarmerie squad commanders, police officers, members of the security branch of the police, and border police.

VI. Economic situation

41. Like the failed coup of 28 May 2001, the Bozizé affair, to a lesser extent, also had adverse consequences for the country's economy. The blocking of the capital's main supply route for nearly a week and the closure of offices, banks and businesses for an entire week led to a major loss of income for the State, further reducing its capacity to meet its expenses, particularly salaries. The review mission for the October 2000-March 2001 interim programme is planned for the first quarter of 2002.

42. The repeated crises experienced by the Central African Republic since the beginning of 2001 have unfortunately made it impossible for the cooperation programmes with the Bretton Woods institutions to proceed as planned. Among other difficulties, the Government of the Central African Republic has not yet been able to receive a secondment of high-level experts to strengthen its capacities in economic and financial management. I therefore urge the development partners to continue to provide assistance to the Central African Republic in this sphere.

43. The donor meeting, initially scheduled for September 2001, was held in Paris on 20 December 2001. The negotiations with the Bretton Woods institutions will take place at the end of March 2002 and a new programme could be finalized in April 2002. Many partners have made their assistance to the Central African Republic contingent on the existence of this programme. In the meantime, the Central African Republic will experience a very difficult financial situation, since there will be no inflow of funds.

44. I should like to draw the attention of members of the Council to the critical situation of the Central African Republic in the area of external debt. The country has not yet benefited from the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative. On 14 November 2001, President Patassé requested me to intervene with the Bretton Woods institutions in order

to facilitate the rapid access of the Central African Republic to the HIPC initiative so that it can receive additional resources for its development. I indicated that I intended to review with the authorities of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank appropriate ways of facilitating access by the Central African Republic to the HIPC initiative. In this respect, it is clear that the achievement of tangible progress in the area of national reconciliation would create a favourable political context for this step.

VII. Observations

45. I stressed in my report of 21 September 2001 that the situation in the Central African Republic was gradually returning to normal. The Bozizé affair has now slowed down this process by further weakening the State in its economic recovery efforts.

46. In the area of political dialogue, the national reconciliation which was expected after the failed coup d'état of 28 May 2001 has still not taken place, partly because of the continuing judicial investigations. However, a meeting between President Patassé and the opposition leaders would help reduce tension and bring together the main political actors.

47. In this respect, I commend the efforts which the leaders of the subregion are making to promote a resumption of political dialogue and encourage national reconciliation in the Central African Republic.

48. Meanwhile, it is to be hoped that President Patassé's solemn call for the return of refugees will contribute to an easing of tension. The provisions, including security provisions, taken by the authorities in the context of the reception committee for these refugees, in conjunction with BONUCA, agencies of the United Nations system and some embassies, including those of the countries which are permanent members of the Security Council, demonstrate the desire of the authorities to rebuild unity among the sons and daughters of the nation.

49. In the area of human rights, the conclusion of the mandate of the joint commission of judicial inquiry and the trial of the individuals who took part in the coup will certainly help to consolidate the progress already made, to which I drew attention in my report of 21 September 2001.

50. Pending the outcome of the donor meeting held in Paris on 20 December 2001, I encourage the development partners to continue to assist the Central African Republic during this transitional period, in which there are likely to be greater difficulties than before.

51. Lastly, I should like to express my gratitude to my representative, General Lamine Cissé, and to the entire United Nations team for the commendable efforts they are making to restore calm in the country and help the Government deal with the many challenges facing the Central African Republic.

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Security Council

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3 January 2002
English
Original: Arabic

Letter dated 2 January 2002 from the Permanent Representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

In the context of his efforts to defuse the crisis between India and Pakistan, Colonel Muammar Qaddafi, Leader of the Revolution, addressed letters to the President of Pakistan, Mr. Pervez Musharraf, and to the Prime Minister of India, Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, in which he stated that he was deeply concerned about the existing tension on the border between the two countries and urged the two leaders to surmount this crisis, to settle it by peaceful means, and thus to avoid the serious consequences that might arise from the use of the weapons of mass destruction that the two countries possess.

After speaking by telephone with the leaders of India and Pakistan, the Leader of the Revolution decided to dispatch a Libyan envoy to India and Pakistan to pursue the efforts undertaken. Please find below the text of the two letters mentioned above.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annexes circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Abuzed Omar **Dorda**
Permanent Representative

02-20076 (E) 020102 030102

Annexes to the letter dated 2 January 2002 from the Permanent Representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Annex I

Sir,

In view of the fraternal relations between our two countries, I should like to express my deep concern about the existing tension on the border between India and Pakistan. We are faced with an unprofitable situation and an outmoded means of settling crises, a means which the two countries must and should have ruled out in this era of globalization and common space.

The Indian Ocean region will one day encompass the two countries and may become a region with a single defence system, a single identity and a single currency. Our concern is especially pronounced because India and Pakistan possess weapons of mass destruction, and the current escalation could lead to the further development of those weapons, with all the dangers which that implies.

India, Pakistan and Bangladesh were originally one country. This great country was divided as a result of plots hatched abroad, and those same foreign States are now plotting to get these countries to destroy one another.

I am convinced that you have the capabilities and the wisdom needed to surmount this crisis.

May peace, compassion and the blessing of God be with you.

Colonel Muammar Qaddafi

His Excellency Pervez Musharraf
President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Annex II

Sir,

In view of the fraternal relations between our two countries, I should like to express my deep concern about the existing tension on the border between India and Pakistan. We are faced with an unprofitable situation and an outmoded means of settling crises, a means which the two countries must and should have ruled out in this era of globalization and common space.

The Indian Ocean region will one day encompass the two countries and may become a region with a single defence system, a single identity and a single currency. Our concern is especially pronounced because India and Pakistan possess weapons of mass destruction, and the current escalation could lead to the further development of those weapons, with all the dangers which that implies.

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I am convinced that you have the capabilities and the wisdom needed to surmount this crisis.

May peace, compassion and the blessing of God be with you.

Colonel Muammar Qaddafi

His Excellency Atal Bihari Vajpayee
Prime Minister of India

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Letter dated 2 January 2002 from the Permanent Representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Corrigendum

Delete annexes I and II.

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General Assembly
Fifty-sixth session
Agenda items 21 (d), 25, 33, 41, 69 and 90

Security Council
Fifty-seventh year

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations: cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference

United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations

Return or restitution of cultural property to the countries of origin

Question of Palestine

Development in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security

Questions relating to information

Letter dated 2 January 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to Your Excellency herewith the following documents of the third session of Ministers of Culture of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, held in Doha, State of Qatar, during the period 29 to 31 December 2001:

(a) Text of the statement of His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, Chairman of the Ninth Islamic Summit Conference of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, at the opening of the session (annex I);

(b) Text of the Final Communiqué (annex II).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annexes circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 21 (d), 25, 33, 41, 69 and 90, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Nassir Abdulaziz **Al-Nasser**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

02-20088 (E) 180102 180102

Annex I to the letter dated 2 January 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Arabic]

Your session is being held under international circumstances, negative impacts and repercussions of which are reflected on lifestyles and the system of values and concepts. This, in turn, makes it imperative for all of us to explore the right ways of dealing with these conditions and the challenges they pose to our Islamic nation and to try to project the true image of Islam and Muslims, in a way which unequivocally reflects the true spirit of Islam and its sublime teachings, thereby enabling Muslims to face up to these challenges with the utmost consciousness and awareness. Hence the importance of speeding up the implementation of the cultural strategy for the Islamic world, which your esteemed session places at the top of its priorities and which we deem to be a vital step in the right direction towards affirmation of the collective will of the nation and striving to resume its cultural and civilizational role in communication and dialogue with other cultures at a time when some erroneous concepts have emerged regarding the inevitability of the clash of cultures and the isolation and renunciation of the other.

Hence, we repeat our call for a dialogue of cultures, without which humanity will not be secure nor peace prevail.

It is imperative upon us to embark on rectifying the distorted and false images of Islam and Muslims in order to be able to enhance mutual understanding, especially since of late many people are propagating such ideas extensively in intellectual and media circles, particularly in the West. This responsibility requires us to make use of all our potentials to develop a positive and frank dialogue with members of other civilizations with the objective of conveying to them a clear picture of Islam and Islamic culture. We may have to draw on the achievements of the communications and information revolution, and in particular the vital role being played by satellite channels in forming cultural awareness and influencing public opinion in different countries and nations. We have to put among our priorities for joint Islamic cultural action the setting up of an Islamic satellite channel, as an essential means of communication and dialogue with other civilizations that would be accessible to various Islamic schools of thought and cultural theories.

We have also to make use of all the means available to us. We have emigrant Muslim communities all over the world to whom we have to extend our hands and with whom we have to communicate, and through whom we can address those of other cultures amid which those emigrant Muslims live. The knowledge and capabilities as well as the ties those communities have with their Muslim nation have made them the window through which other cultures view Islam.

We have to break the hateful link which some prejudiced quarters try to establish between Islam and terrorism, and we must work in all earnestness to correct the unfair stereotyped image attached to Muslims and explain the true principles of Islamic culture.

I should also like to underline the necessity of standing up against the practices of the Israeli occupation forces against the unarmed Palestinian people, the flagrant violations against its cultural and educational institutions and the destruction and

confiscation of its property, shrines and historical and archaeological sites in all the occupied Palestinian territories.

We should like to express our thanks for the valuable efforts being exerted by His Excellency President Abdullah Wade, President of the fraternal Republic of Senegal, in his capacity as Chairman of the Standing Committee for Information and Cultural Affairs.

It is my pleasure also to commend the considerable achievements of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in the service of its Islamic nation.

You are most welcome in Doha, and I wish your session all success. May the Peace, Mercy and Blessing of God be upon you.

Annex II to the letter dated 2 January 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Final communiqué of the third session of Ministers of Culture of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (Doha, 29-31 December 2001)

Under the august sponsorship of His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, Chairman of the Ninth Islamic Summit Conference; at the invitation of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO); and in cooperation and coordination with the Government of the State of Qatar and with the secretariat of the Ninth Islamic Summit Conference, the Islamic Conference of Ministers of Culture held its third session, generously hosted by His Highness, in Doha from 14 to 16 Shawwal 1422 a.h., corresponding to 29 to 31 December 2001 a.d. The opening ceremony of the Conference was attended by His Highness Sheikh Jasim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, heir apparent of the State of Qatar; the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference; the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); and the Director-General of the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO).

His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, the country's Emir, honoured the session by chairing its opening meeting. In his opening statement he pointed out that the session was being held under international circumstances whose negative repercussions were reflected in lifestyles, value systems and ways of thinking, thus making it imperative for all to explore effective means of dealing with those circumstances and the challenges they posed to the Islamic nation.

He said that it was essential to correct the distorted and false image of Islam and Muslims so as to enhance mutual understanding, especially since of late many people were widely propagating such images in intellectual circles and the media, particularly in the West. It was therefore imperative to make use of all available potential to develop a positive and frank dialogue with members of other civilizations so as to convey to them a clear picture of Islam and Islamic culture.

He also underlined the necessity of standing up against the practices of the Israeli occupation forces against the unarmed Palestinian people, the flagrant violations against its cultural and educational institutions and the destruction and confiscation of its property, shrines and historical and archaeological sites throughout the Palestinian territories.

Among the priorities for joint Islamic cultural action, His Highness called for the establishment of a project for setting up an Islamic satellite channel as an essential means of communication and dialogue with other civilizations that would be accessible to the various schools of thought and cultural trends within Islam.

He mentioned the considerable achievements of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in the service of the Islamic nation.

The session decided to adopt the statement of His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, as one of its official documents.

Next, His Excellency Mr. Abdelouahed Belkeziz, Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, took the floor and spoke of the importance of the convening of the third session of Ministers of Culture of the Organization of the Islamic Conference at the current stage of developments in the Arab world. The Islamic nation, he said, was currently being subjected to a fierce attack on its values and its historical position and an attempt to destroy its pioneering role in building the lofty edifice of civilization. He pointed out that the Organization of the Islamic Conference had attributed extreme importance to the fundamental role of culture in defining the identity and personality of peoples. He stressed the importance of dialogue among different civilizations and cultures for coexistence, for achieving mutual recognition and for eliminating struggles such as those that had marked the relations among those civilizations down through the ages and commended ISESCO on its achievements.

Speaking of the role of culture, His Excellency Mr. Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, Director-General of ISESCO, said that however varied the notions and views regarding culture, its mission in life and its function in society might be, culture was the most vital element in the building of the human being, the growth of nations, the shaping of the future and the moulding of civilization, owing to its extraordinarily important role in directing the human mind, in guiding human thought and in creating powerful, inspiring incentives to effective action capable of bringing change, development and renewal at all levels. In all cases the pivot about which the function of culture revolved, he said, was the building of the human personality.

The Director-General said that every nation shaped its present and planned for its future in the light of its own thinking, heritage and civilization, and the Islamic nation possessed a cultural stock to provide it with elements of strength, invulnerability and permanence, offering it the means and capabilities for entering the civilizational arena, not in order to ignite the flames of cultural struggle or fire a clash of civilizations, but to attenuate that struggle and further the current trends in international relations towards dialogue and communication based on the norms of international law and humanitarian principles and inspired by the teachings of the revealed religions.

His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Achari, Minister of Culture and Communication of Morocco and Chairman of the second session of the Islamic Conference of Ministers of Culture, spoke at the opening meeting, expressing his appreciation to the Emir, Government and people of Qatar for generously sponsoring the Conference. He called for the building of an Islamic cultural system, stressing the need to continue the efforts to resist the savage campaign against Islamic culture, a campaign based on considerable ignorance and misunderstanding and a conflict of positions and interests. He stated that restoring the image of Islamic culture could be achieved only within the framework of an overall project, starting with a reminder of the decisions of the previous Islamic Conference. He denounced the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people and called for a revival of the spirit of the blessed Al-Quds intifada to help define the elements of an Islamic cultural intifada of the media.

Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, in his statement delivered at the opening meeting, spoke of the civilizational mission of Islamic Arab culture. He pointed out that its success lay in the fact that it did not reject other

cultures, emphasizing that Islamic Arab civilization had helped to save the culture of the Mediterranean and the Middle East. He also praised the advances in knowledge achieved by Islamic Arab culture.

The history of Islamic Arab civilization, he said, offered an example of cultural coexistence in the world. He referred to the Medellín Declaration for Cultural Diversity and Tolerance, which, he said, provided a covenant whereby one could define cultural practices with a view to safeguarding cultural diversity. He called for the translation of the general principles of that Declaration into concrete acts, urging the UNESCO member States to participate energetically in the protection of cultural diversity and the maintenance of the common heritage of humanity.

He saluted the role of ISESCO as an instrument for a dialogue among civilizations, commending it on the two international symposia it had recently held on that topic in Rabat and Tunis.

In his statement delivered at the opening meeting, Mr. Al-Munji Bosnina, Director-General of ALECSO, stressed the importance of the fruitful cooperation between ISESCO and ALECSO in fields of common concern to them, underscoring the need to develop that cooperation further and use it to serve the purposes of the Islamic Arab nation. Islamic Arab culture, he said, had always been a culture of fundamental constants, foremost among them being acceptance of others, rapprochement and coexistence with them and mutual dealings based on a spirit of give and take.

He pointed out that Islam was a religion characterized by tolerance, openness and moderation that wished for the well-being of all. Even the West, he said, might be the victim of certain of its own extremists. Without a doubt there existed ignorance, either real or feigned, and misunderstanding, and there clearly existed inflexibility, which he and those present rejected. He called for a calm and constructive dialogue in which the starting point would be gaining mutual familiarity on which to build a system for living side by side.

His Excellency Mr. Abdallah bin Khalifa Al-Attiyah, Minister of State and Chairman of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Heritage of the State of Qatar, was elected Chairman of the session.

A succession of ministers and representatives of Islamic, Arab and international organizations then took the floor, expressing their appreciation to the State of Qatar and to its Emir and also their appreciation of the invitation addressed to them by ISESCO to attend the session as representatives of member States and of organizations that engage in fruitful cooperation with them. They were unanimous in considering the session an opportunity for the States members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to give a fresh start to the implementation of the Cultural Strategy for the Islamic World.

The members of the session examined together the topics, issues and points on the agenda in a transparent, comprehensive view that drew together all the components of the general cultural landscape in the Islamic world and decided to reaffirm their collective will to implement the Cultural Strategy consciously and responsibly, bearing in mind the changing international developments reflected — both positively and negatively — in every aspect of the Islamic world.

The session noted with satisfaction the efforts made by ISESCO to implement the resolutions and recommendations adopted at the previous session, commending the achievements realized in that regard. They firmly resolved to provide further possibilities and make efforts to create further opportunities for fostering continued work in that direction, taking into consideration the nature of the conditions through which the Islamic world was passing as a result of the profound changes taking place in the world owing to the tumultuous events of the previous months.

The discussions that took place during the meetings of the session covered general cultural conditions in the Islamic world, the cultural and media-related impact of globalizing trends on culture in Islamic societies, the resulting diverse and multifarious challenges that tended to weaken the cultural identity of the Islamic nation, the breakdown of the wall of impenetrability in the Islamic world and the subjection of the Islamic cultural identity to intense pressures that detracted from the solidity, permanence, stability and strength of the Islamic civilizational and cultural position.

The participants emphasized the importance of redoubling, coordinating and pooling efforts to enhance the effectiveness of the Cultural Strategy and adapt it to new regional and international developments, considering it a flexible plan of action and pliable framework capable of responding to the demands of multi-purpose comprehensive development in the Islamic world and taking into account the differing conditions and multiplicity of political and cultural options in the different member States.

The session, after exhaustively discussing the reports submitted to it by ISESCO on the implementation of the resolutions of the second session; the implementation of the strategy for Islamic cultural endeavour in the West; ISESCO activities in connection with the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations (2001); the recommendations of the specialized committees of the Organization of the Islamic Conference relating to the Cultural Strategy; the distortion of Islam and Islamic civilization by the media in the context of international developments; the protection of Islamic cultural sites and institutions in Al-Quds Al-Sharif; and the demand for the return of stolen Islamic cultural objects, adopted appropriate resolutions in respect of those matters.

The session affirmed the position of the Islamic world with regard to the dialogue among civilizations based on the magnanimous principles of Islam and its teachings calling for civilizational tolerance, peaceful coexistence and mutual respect for the cultural and civilizational characteristics of nations. It also affirmed the sincere desire of the Islamic world to continue the dialogue with human cultures, and called upon international parties to be responsive to the positive position of the Islamic world on the dialogue among civilizations and to demonstrate a sincere desire to achieve understanding among the peoples of the world on the basis of mutual respect and within the framework of international law, in order to spare mankind crises and conflicts.

The session decided to give full support to ISESCO in continuing its work of following up the applications of the Cultural Strategy and the strategy for Islamic cultural endeavour in the West. It called for the revitalization of the role of the Supreme Council for Education and Culture in the West and called upon ISESCO to develop a comprehensive concept to crystallize its integrated vision for Islamic cultural endeavour in the West in the light of international variables.

The session charged ISESCO with the drawing up of a detailed programme to counter media campaigns distorting Islam and Islamic civilization and called upon ISESCO to submit this programme to member States for comment. The session called upon member States to participate in this programme in order to refute the calumnies and falsehoods propagated by the Western media against Islam and Islamic civilization and to make the diplomatic missions of member States fully aware of their responsibilities in this matter.

In this context, the session emphasized that the countering of media campaigns that distort the image of Islam and Muslims is the joint responsibility of all member States and for non-governmental media in the Islamic world, intellectuals, scientists, cultural figures and representatives of the press and the media generally. It called upon member States to take initiatives at the level of their media organs, to the extent of their capabilities and within the framework of their information and cultural policies, to participate in correcting the image of Islam in the West.

The session expressed growing concern about the extensive report submitted to it by ISESCO concerning the protection of Islamic sites and institutions in Al-Quds Al-Sharif. The session affirmed the need to protect the rights of the Palestinian people generally, which is exposed to crushing colonialist aggression waged against it by the Israeli occupation authorities and the Jewish colonialist settlers in the Palestinian territories. The session appealed to the United Nations for speedy intervention to ensure international protection for the Palestinian people, which naturally includes the protection of the Islamic cultural sites and institutions in Al-Quds Al-Sharif. The session stressed the responsibility of UNESCO and the other international organizations concerned with regard to the protection of these Palestinian cultural sites and institutions and support for the position of the Islamic world on this issue.

The session approved the project to establish an Islamic satellite channel in accordance with the studies prepared by ISESCO and called upon ISESCO and the competent agencies in the State of Qatar to follow up implementation of the project. It also called upon member States to provide all kinds of support for the implementation of this important project as soon as possible.

The session addressed an appeal to the Governments and institutions of the international community to strive for the speedy restoration of looted Islamic cultural property to its original owners, in accordance with the norms of international law and in implementation of the right of peoples to enjoyment of their cultural specificities and their right to the preservation of their historic cultural property looted during periods of colonial occupation. It stressed the inadmissibility of the sale of any looted cultural property by any agency or persons and called for the reporting of such cases to Interpol and the State having rightful ownership of such property. It called upon member States to approach Western States in possession of such property with a view to restoring it to its place of origin.

The session adopted a draft programme of Islamic cultural capitals and decided to select the city of Makkah Al-Mukarramah as a capital of Islamic culture for the year 2004, as the first capital to inaugurate the implementation of this programme.

The session charged the Advisory Council for the Implementation of the Cultural Strategy for the Islamic World with selecting the capitals of Islamic culture

on a regular basis, designating annually three cities of States members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference as capitals of Islamic culture.

The session elected the new members of the Advisory Council for the Implementation of the Cultural Strategy for the Islamic World and expressed appreciation to the outgoing members of the Council. The session affirmed that ISESCO was charged with following up the work of the Advisory Council and continuing to provide it with support in carrying out its responsibilities through coordination with the General Secretariat of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

The session urged those member States that had not yet joined ISESCO to do so.

The session addressed a telegram to the President of the Swedish Academy protesting the award of the Nobel Prize for Literature for 2001 to the racist writer V. S. Naipaul and called upon the Academy to revise its decision, expressing severe censure of the decision taken by this Academy to award the Nobel Prize to an author who attacks Islam and Muslims in his writings, incites hatred among peoples and stirs up strife between cultures and civilizations, which is contrary to international covenants, declarations and agreements and offends human values and divine principles.

In concluding its proceedings, the session addressed a message of thanks and appreciation to His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, Chairman of the Ninth Islamic Summit Conference.